

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A system for distributing a debt in a content providing service, the system being communicably connected to a content storage device that stores one or more digital contents and also communicably connects to an additional-information storage device that stores additional information offered that is provided by one or more additional-information providers, the system having a capability of distributing a debt such that when additional information is transmitted to a user associated with a digital content, at least a portion of the debt imposed upon the user as a result of transmission of the digital content to the user is distributed to the additional-information provider of the additional information,

the digital content and the additional information being selected from the content storage device and the additional-information storage device in accordance with a selection criterion that is based on a debt distribution, designated by the user in a user profile, and at least a portion of the debt imposed upon the user is distributed to the additional-information provider based on the selection result.

2. (Currently Amended) A billing system for use in a content providing service, the system being communicably connected to content storage device that stores one or more digital contents and also communicably connects to an additional-information storage device that stores additional information offered that is provided by one or more additional-information providers, the system having a capability of distributing a payment value such that when additional information is transmitted to a user associated with a digital content, at least a portion of the payment value charged to the user as a result of transmission of the digital content to the user is distributed to the additional-information provider of the additional information, the system comprising:

a distribution-manner information storage device that stores distribution-manner information indicating a manner of distributing the payment value, designated by the user in a user profile;

a content selection device that selects a digital content from the digital contents stored in the content storage device;

an additional-information selection device that selects additional information from the additional information stored in the additional-information storage device;

an additional-information linkage device that makes a link between the digital content selected by the content selection device and the additional information selected by the additional-information selection device;

a content transmission device that transmits the digital content linked to the additional information to the user; and

a payment value distribution device that distributes a portion of the payment value charged to the user to the additional-information provider, in accordance with the selection result made by the content selection device and in accordance with the selection result made by the additional-information selection device,

at least one of the content selection device and the additional-information selection device making a selection based on the distribution-manner information stored in the distribution-manner information storage device and based on a selection result made by the other one of the content selection device and the additional-information selection device.

3. (Previously Presented) A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 2,

the content storage device storing the digital content such that the digital content is related to digital-content-fee information indicating a fee for the digital content to be paid by the user,

the additional-information storage device storing the additional information such that the additional information is related to discount value information indicating a discount value that will be reduced from the payment value when the additional information is linked to the digital content,

at least one of the content selection device and the additional-information selection device making a selection such that the sum of the fee calculated on the basis of the digital-content-fee information or the discount value information corresponding to a selection result made by the other one of the content selection device and the additional-information selection device based on the distribution-manner information stored in the distribution-manner information storage device and the fee calculated on the basis of the discount value information or the digital-content-fee information corresponding to a selection result made by the user meets a condition specified by the user.

4. (Previously Presented) A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 3,

the distribution-manner information being information indicating a maximum value in terms of the payment value designated by the user, and

the content selection device selecting the digital content such that the fee calculated on the basis of the digital-content-fee information corresponding to the digital content to be selected by the content selection device does not become greater than the sum of the maximum value indicated by the distribution-manner information and the discount value calculated on the basis of the discount value information corresponding to the additional information selected by the additional-information selection device.

5. (Previously Presented) A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 3,

the distribution-manner information being information indicating a maximum value in terms of the payment value designated by the user, and

the additional-information selection device selecting the additional information such that the fee calculated on the basis of the digital-content-fee information corresponding to the digital content selected by the content selection means does not become greater than the sum of the maximum value indicated by the distribution-manner information and the discount value calculated on the basis of the discount value information corresponding to the additional information to be selected by the additional-information selection device.

6. (Previously Presented) A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 4, further comprising

a fee calculation device that calculates the fee on the basis of the digital-content-fee information corresponding to the digital content selected by the content selection device; and

a discount value calculation device that calculates the discount value on the basis of the discount value information corresponding to the additional information selected by the additional-information selection device,

the content selection device selecting the digital content such that the fee calculated on the basis of the digital-content-fee information corresponding to the digital content to be selected by the content selection device does not exceed than the sum of the maximum value indicated by the distribution-manner information and the discount value calculated by the discount value calculation device, and

the additional-information selection device selecting the additional information such that the fee calculated by the fee calculation means does not exceed the sum of the maximum value indicated by the distribution-manner information and the discount

value calculated on the basis of the discount value information corresponding to the additional information to be selected by the additional-information selection device.

7. (Previously Presented) A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 3,

the distribution-manner information being information indicating a selection condition in terms of the additional information designated by the user,

the additional-information selection device selecting additional information that meets the selection condition indicated by the distribution-manner information, and

the fee distribution device determining the payment value to be paid by the user by subtracting the discount value calculated on the basis of the discount value information corresponding to the additional information selected by the additional-information selection device from the fee calculated on the basis of the digital-content-fee information corresponding to the digital content selected by the digital content selection device.

8. (Previously Presented) A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 3,

the distribution-manner information being information indicating a digital content selection condition specified by the user,

the content selection device selecting a digital content that meets the selection condition indicated by the distribution-manner information, and

the fee distribution device determining the payment value to be paid by the user by subtracting the discount value calculated on the basis of the discount value information corresponding to the additional information selected by the additional-information selection device from the fee calculated on the basis of the digital-content-fee

information corresponding to the digital content selected by the digital content selection device.

9. (Previously Presented) A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 2, further comprising:

user information storage device that stores user information associated with a user, and

content layout device that determines an output layout of the digital content linked to the additional information, in accordance with the user information stored in the user information storage device, and laying out the digital content in accordance with the determined output layout,

the content distribution device transmitting a digital content laid out by the layout device to the user.

10. (Previously Presented) A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 2, further comprising a distribution-result providing device that provides a distribution result made by the fee distribution device to the user.

11. (Previously Presented) A billing system for use in a content distribution service according to Claim 10, further comprising:

a modify command input device that inputs a modify command to modify the distribution-manner information in response to the distribution result provided by the distribution-result providing device; and

a distribution information modifying device that modifies the distribution-manner information stored in the distribution-manner information storage device in accordance with the modify command inputted via the modify command input device.

12. (Currently Amended) A method of distributing a debt for use in a content distribution service such that when additional information offered for being provided by an

additional-information provider is transmitted to a user associated with a digital content, at least a portion of a debt imposed upon the user as a result of transmission of the digital content to the user is distributed to the additional-information provider, the method comprising the steps of:

selecting a digital content and additional information from digital contents and additional information respectively stored in a content storage device and an additional-information storage device in accordance with a selection criterion, in terms of the debt distribution, designated by the user in a user profile; and

distributing at least a portion of the debt imposed upon the user to the additional-information provider in accordance with the selection result.

13. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium in which is stored a debt distribution program for controlling a computer to execute a process of distributing a debt such that when additional information offered for being provided by an additional-information provider is transmitted to a user associated with a digital content, at least a portion of the debt imposed upon the user as a result of transmission of the digital content to the user is distributed to the additional-information provider, the process comprising the steps of:

selecting a digital content and additional information from digital contents and additional information respectively stored in content storage device and additional-information storage device in accordance with a selection criterion, in terms of the debt distribution designated by the user in a user profile; and

distributing at least a portion of the debt imposed upon the user to the additional-information provider based on the selection result.